

Afterglow

by minachandler

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Summary: "Laurel Lance," he whispers. "The prettiest girl in the whole damn world." Set during 1x22. When Laurel returns to her bedroom to Oliver, he surprises her by showing her a memento she can't quite believe he held onto.

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The feeling of Oliver's shirt on Laurel is unusual, yet at the same time so familiar and comforting that she feels so light, like she's walking on air, as she returns to her bedroom. Ollie's back is to her and he's reaching over the side of the bed for something. She figures he hasn't heard her coming, so with a slight smile she jumps on top of him and lands a kiss inelegantly on his jaw.

She expects him to jump or yelp or show some sign of surprise (that's what he used to do), but Ollie just smiles back, resuming his previous position against the pillows, his hand settling on her bare thigh.

"Laurel Lance," he whispers. "The prettiest girl in the whole damn world."

"You're not too bad yourself," Laurel manages to reply, and his eyes light up in a way that she doesn't think she'll ever be used to. Still, she's never been great at hiding her feeling disconcerted â€" something Ollie catches onto.

"I heard you come in," he says in explanation â€" like he's read her mind.

"I don't know how that island gave you such good hearing," Laurel says, rolling off him and shuffling a little closer to him.

But at this Laurel feels Oliver sigh against her. His hand goes up to behind her neck so he can kiss her forehead, and when he speaks again

his words hum gently, warmly against her skin.

"There's a lot about the island that you don't know," he admits.

"I know," she replies. "And that's okay. Weâ€| have time."

"That's good," Ollie says. "Because I need time. Time for me to fix things. Make it up to you properly. Be good to you."

There's this hopefulness in his eyes as they meet hers that makes Laurel's heart soar in a way she didn't think it ever would â€" not for Oliver, anyway. She opens her mouth, but her lips can't quite formulate a reply, so she does the next best thing, answers him with a kiss, and he smiles against her mouth before his tongue darts out to touch her lip.

"But there isâ€| one thing I've wanted to tell you since â€" since I got on that island in the first place."

Laurel nods, tilts her head to one side a little and surveys him with a slight smile as her hand absent-mindedly slips down his chest. (He's never had any tattoos before, and now his torso is covered with them â€" tattoos and scars. She hopes, one day, if they can, if things go okay, that he can tell her about them.)

"What is it?"

"Better if I justâ€| show you." He leans over the side of the bed again and in his hand is a small photo. When he turns it over Laurel's breath suddenly gets caught in her throat.

It's the photo she gave him before he got on the Gambit. It's worn and more than a little frayed on the edges, and the corners are starting to curl in on themselves. It's faded, too, but none of that matters. Not when it reminds her of what they used to have â€" maybe what they can have again, if they try.

"You kept that?" she finally says, and she's aware her voice is coming out as no more than a whisper.

"I did," Ollie says softly. "When I first got to the island and realised I couldn'tâ€| buy my way out, or anything, I made a promise to myself. To you. That I would make it home, whatever it took, to get back to you, and that I would do everything I could to earn your forgiveness."

Laurel's hand goes up to cradle his cheek. "Can I ask you something?" He nods, catching her hand in his and dropping a kiss on her palm. "Did you mean it when you said there were times when you wanted to die?"

"Yes," he says after only a second's hesitation. "There were. But like I said. There was something I wanted more."

"I'm glad you kept going," Laurel says quietly. Then she chuckles a little. "I know you're more of a lover than a fighter â€"" Oliver laughs lightly at this too "â€" but I'm glad I didn't lose you for good."

"You took the words right out of my mouth," Oliver says sincerely.

"I've missed you."

And suddenly he flips over so he's on top of her, undoing the couple buttons of his shirt that she did up. The moment her breasts are exposed to cool air she shivers and her nipples stiffen, even before Oliver's thumb brushes over one of them. He kisses her carefully down her neck, making her arch her back and bury her fingers in his hair.

"I've missed you too," Laurel tells him, gasping when his tongue hits a spot between her breasts, just above her ribcage, and the familiar hot ache of arousal settles deep in her groin once his fingers begin a practiced dance along the inside of her thigh. "I've missed how good you are at this."

He looks up, meeting her eyes but staying where he is at her abdomen.

"I had a good teacher," he tells her, and the slight smirk on his lips takes her back to their earliest days together – back when things were simpler and easier and they were just two people who were in love and nothing else mattered.

She closes her eyes and Oliver kisses his way down, past her navel and along her hip until he's licking the inside of her wet thigh. Laurel's quivering, now, and already her breaths are coming out shorter. And when his mouth reaches her centre and he buries himself between her legs she reaches a high that she never thought she would again, so much so that she feels lightheaded,

Still, in the aftermath of her climax, even in her state of giddy contentment, Laurel can just about make out the softest whisper of "I love you" as Ollie mouths the words into her skin and then rests his head on her stomach.

Maybe one day, Laurel thinks, just before she starts drifting off, she might be able to say it back.

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